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1962/11/12



ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

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INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

12 November 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

SUBJECT: Suggested DOD Position on Ball Memoranda to the President

I. "We would tacitly or explicitly accept the fact or fiction (whichever it might be) that Khrushchev had complied to the extent of his ability and thereafter concentrate on pressure on Cuba."

DOD concurs; but recommends making the shift explicit through Presidential or State news release. Furthermore, we should have the Russians state publicly that the remaining weapons belong to Cuba. We should also press the Russians to withdraw their personnel from operational control or active support of existing weapons. This is essential because without Russian support the SAM sites would be inoperable and furthermore a possible subsequent U.S. action against SAM's, anti-aircraft, or IL-28's would then not be a U.S.-U.S.S.R. confrontation.

II. Discussion

The basic Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement calls for the removal of offensive weapons from Cuba and the establishment of adequate inspection. Our principal criticism of the Ball paper is that it emphasizes the problem of the removal of the IL-28's, and does not adequately cover the problem of obtaining ground inspection. In our opinion, the removal of the IL-28's is secondary to the problem of inspection.

While the achievement of our goals is not essential within a day or even a few days, it is essential that the United States maintain pressure on Castro until these agreements are fulfilled or a significant change in the Cuban regime is achieved.

III. Alternative Courses of Action

As noted by Mr. Ball the four remaining courses of action are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, we propose to comment on the four courses separately and then propose a course of action which

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combines two and possibly three of the four alternatives.

A. Direct Military Action

While we believe that the possibility of action as outlined in Mr. Ball's memorandum should remain open and the destruction of the IL-28's may be more difficult at some future date than it is today, we should not undertake direct military action at this time. While action now would destroy the bombers, it would undoubtedly make inspection in Cuba impossible short of invasion, or revolution.

B. Quarantine

The quarantine which was put into effect by Presidential proclamation of October 23 to date has proved to be an effective and flexible instrument for applying pressure in Cuba. Enforcement procedures have and will provide tactical flexibility, enforcement can be suspended, maintained or if necessary extended (to POL). It is by far the most effective instrument available in the present crisis. We believe the quarantine should not be "removed" until the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreements are fulfilled.

Arguments Pro

The removal of the quarantine, short of compliance with the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreements, would make it difficult to justify re-establishment of the quarantine at a later date.

There is at the present time broad NATO-OAS support for U.S. demands for adequate on-site inspection. If we remove the quarantine with that issue unresolved, we will find it difficult if not impossible to reopen this sanction as an appropriate pressure two or three weeks from now. We could not then expect to have the broad international support which we have today.

C. Reinforced Aerial Surveillance

Mr. Ball suggests that "instead of reimposing the blockade, we should undertake a systematic and unremitting air reconnaissance over Cuba both high and low until such time as:

- (1) Castro yielded on inspection and the removal of the IL-28's,
- (2) Castro was overthrown or,
- (3) The reconnaissance provoked an armed response that justified our taking direct military action.

- 2 -

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While the Ball proposal is superficially attractive because it eases present tensions, in fact, it merely postpones the difficult decisions. We believe it extremely unlikely that Castro will be brought down merely by overflights. Therefore, after a few weeks of continued low level harassing flights, we would find ourselves in a position where either (a) Castro has not taken action against the aircraft; and the United States is no nearer its objective, or (b) our reconnaissance aircraft have been fired upon, possibly losing one or more aircraft with a resulting heightening of domestic and international tensions.

It is very likely that Castro would withhold his fire and make a political appeal against "imperialistic U.S. aggression", claiming (quite truthfully) that such harassment far exceeded any legitimate requirements for aerial inspection. (Current Defense Department studies show that adequate inspection could be achieved by approximately 8 high altitude flights per month and a limited number of low altitude flights to check suspicious events. The wide discrepancies between this type of surveillance and the large number of low level flights necessary to provoke major reaction in Cuba is both real and obvious.) The continued positioning of IL-28 aircraft at present airfields and their inactivity would serve to undercut any need for such a large low level reconnaissance effort.

There are innumerable details which would have to be carefully planned if the masquerade of surveillance was to be maintained to justify the low level flights. For example, we would have to gather a very large portion of existing reconnaissance aircraft. If we use non-reconnaissance aircraft, the Cubans might be expected to recognize the difference and shoot at our fighters so as to make a propaganda point that these aircraft were not "reconnaissance aircraft".

In any case, if Castro would not return our fire, we would have to start a new track involving re-establishment of the quarantine or other suitable initiatives. Any of these courses will be more difficult two or three weeks from today than they are today.

In regard to (b) above, if for example U.S. aircraft are shot down (in eastern Cuba near Guantanamo), a response a day later against the bomber base in reprisal would appear to be what it is, an artificially contrived situation. In fact, as soon as it becomes clear that the U.S. contemplates action against the bombers, it is very likely that the Cubans will disperse the bombers, either by flying them to many different airfields or actually dismantling the aircraft to hide beneath trees, camouflage, etc., in different parts of the island. Thus, the removal or destruction of the bombers will probably be more difficult not only politically but operationally.

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Cuba 1462

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We should maintain a posture that is in accordance with our position as the major responsible world power. The removal of the quarantine coupled with harassment flights in response to Castro's rebuff of the UN request for ground inspection is not a course of action that dignifies our position.

D. Solution through Security Council Arrangement. The Proposal of Ambassador Stevenson.

Ambassador Stevenson's approach does not cover the problem of long term assurances beyond an ex post facto check of the proposed Soviet and Cuban statements. Therefore, we propose to change point 4. as follows:

4. We will temporarily suspend enforcement of the quarantine and provide short term assurances to Cuba against invasion despite only partial Soviet performance. Such assurances will be operative while important progress is being made toward the achievement of long term safeguards. These could be achieved through assurances and appropriate inspection worked out on a regional basis. On the completion of successful negotiations to achieve such a regional arrangement, the United States will remove the quarantine and will provide suitable long term guarantees in keeping with the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement.

IV. Summary

The Ball paper places major emphasis upon the problem of bomber removal. It does not provide any solution to the problem of obtaining verification through ground inspection or long term safeguards. Provocative reconnaissance leading to attack on the IL-28's would almost surely make the obtaining of long term inspection and adequate guarantees impossible. On Friday, November 9, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reaffirmed their views on ground inspection: "There is no adequate substitute for on-ground site inspection in Cuba." We concur in this view. If pursued, State's plan would weaken our most effective instrument, the quarantine, for harassing aerial flights, an action which may not even solve the IL-28 problem.

V. Recommendation

A. The harassing flight proposal be rejected.

B. Immediate action:

(1) Release Presidential or State Department release, earlier coordinated, restating U.S. objectives and suspending enforcement of the quarantine for a short time.

(2) Authorize Governor Stevenson to attempt to seek agreement such as he proposed, subject to the modifications outlined above.

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Cuba 1962

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C. Contingency Action

In order of priority depending on Cuban behavior:

(1) Enforce the existing blockade. A contingency statement should be prepared for SecState or SecDefense in case Castro makes a public statement that he will not cooperate under any circumstance. Recommend action immediate declaration that U.S. quarantine will be enforced, beginning 48 hours later. This should permit Khrushchev to disengage gracefully if he wishes to do so.

(2) If necessary, extend the blockade to POL.

(3) If the above measures fail, air attacks against the bombers.

Paul H. Nitze

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- 5 -

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Cuba 1962

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A Rebuttal of Mr. Ball's Arguments Against Quarantine

1) Quarantine "fails to meet the criteria -- an action directly operating only on Cuba."

It will meet this criteria if Russia does not attempt to penetrate during any period of blockade enforcement.

2) ~~He~~ Khrushchev could not afford the humiliation of doing so a second time.

a) By maintaining the quarantine we do not force him to accept it a second time, but rather the continuation of the quarantine.

b) The K-K agreement tacitly recognized the existence of the quarantine and its removal upon the completion of the terms. It is far easier for Khrushchev to fulfill the agreement <sup>of tactical</sup> acquiescence in US action in fulfilling the agreement along present lines than to acquiesce in new US actions.

c) The USSR would not (let Cuba be) slowly strangled. This case is ~~extremely~~ unlikely, and in any case the US position would be clear; <sup>verification</sup> ~~inspections~~ and bombers out and the quarantine would be lifted.

3) Khrushchev was willing to pull back his ships carrying sophisticated weapons ... (but not) tankers filled with POL.

Mr. Khrushchev diverted all of his ships from the US quarantine not just missile carrying ships, <sup>until a clarification procedure</sup> and it is likely that he would do so again, without any extension of the quarantine to POL. This does suggest that we should allow some time, say 24-48 hours from enforcement announcement and until enforcement begins so that any USSR ships can clear the area if they so desire.

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Cuba 1962

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# The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited

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# **The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited: An International Collection of Documents, from the Bay of Pigs to the Brink of Nuclear War**

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